

## WEB STYLE GUIDE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

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**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this guide is to provide accepted practices regarding Treasury's Internet presentation to ensure customer ease of use, security from modification, and harmonization of the overall web site image presented by the Treasury and its agencies. This guide is applicable to the systems administrators (or webmasters) of Treasury and bureau web sites.

**AUDIENCE:** To make web presentations useful to a wide range of customers, it is important to keep in mind the audience composition. While web statistics vary and cannot always distinguish users from the naming conventions used, in general, this breaks down as follows:

Business community.....	40 to 50 percent
Educational community.....	12 percent
Government.....	6 percent
Other.....	42 to 32 percent

The most common connection speeds are at the rate of 14.4 or 28.8 kilobytes per second. The most common browsers currently are Netscape, Mosaic, and the Explorer. A text-only option should be implemented to allow access to a greater number of users, including Americans with disabilities.

**LINKS:** Provide narrative text similar to that of a headline in a business article. Highlight key words in the narrative for links to subordinate information. Create content for all links within a general subject area. If there is a new subject area, create a new set of pages. Create a structure containing all the subject areas. Do not repeat pages that already exist elsewhere on the web, link to them, if it is relevant. Always obtain permission of the outside web administrator, if linking outside the server.

**PAGE LENGTH:** It is important to design the home page to the computer screen rather than the printed page. Make sure there is navigable content within the first screen, as the customer cannot see what is below the screen and may lose patience. Subsequent pages may present full documents for scrolling page after page. Long documents (over 10 pages) are best presented as a summary with a table of contents. Consider whether the document would be read on-line or would best be presented as downloadable files. Short documents and pages make your web site easier to use and maintain.

**FILE FORMATS:** Consider the following when creating and sizing different file formats:

The best format for text is HTML or SGML, if customers prefer it. Downloadable files are best presented in Word, WordPerfect or generic ASCII. Forms and newsletters are best presented in Portable Document Format (PDF) with a PDF reader identified to the customer. PDFs that are larger than 500,000 bytes take too long to download. Any file larger than 200,000 bytes should be accompanied by an explanation of its size. Image/graphic files are best presented in GIF or JPEG format and should, if possible, be less than 35,000 bytes. Video clips are best presented in MPEG format and should play for less than 30 seconds. Sound should be embedded or multiplexed with the video. A video player that can play the clip must be identified to the customer. Sound files may be in wav or au format and should always be presented with accompanying text for the hearing disabled.

**GRAPHICS:** Provide the smallest graphic possible to illustrate the concept. If desired, provide an option to view a larger image for greater scrutiny.

Minimize access time always. Warn the audience, if a link leads to a large image. Include alternate text for each image where possible. Get permission to use graphics originated by another site. Use graphical bullets rather than divider bars to emphasize main points. Use a white background when possible (Colored brochures are an exception). Preview your graphics on several hardware and browser combinations to reach most of your audience. Consider the disabled when creating "blinking" text or graphics.

**TEXT-ONLY:** Keep in mind that some users are disabled and/or access the web using low-speed modems or older versions of the graphical browsers. They need an alternative to graphics and tables with no significant content loss.

**NAVIGATION:** Put a title header on each page. Choose the HTML title to reflect the textual page title. Choose a title that accurately captures the essence of the page so that search engines are not misled. If it does not already exist, provision a search engine for your site. Provision for access statistics on the web site and make them available to the Program Managers and the content providers. Try to keep directory strings stable for the search engines. If there is a major change in your structure, try to notify users.

**QUALITY:** Web presentations are highly visible and weigh heavily in user perceptions of the sponsoring organization. Follow the Web Quality Process guidelines. It is critical to ensure that presentations are timely, accurate, and error-free. If a quality problem has been reported and there is a conflict between the systems administrator and the content provider, contact the Internet Program Manager on 202 622-4859. Institute your own quality checks to continuously improve the image of the web presentation. Consider the following:

**LANGUAGE:** Use language that is correctly spelled, positive, and concise.

**IMAGE:** The appearance and content of the web site reflect on the Treasury community. Review all new content to make sure it is releasable to the intended audience.

**DOMAIN NAMES:** A new server in the Treasury community is not official until it has been registered by the Office of Telecommunications Management and the main Treasury server links to it.

**WEB BUSINESS PRACTICES:** Keep in mind and review the Web Business practices whenever you create or link to a new server or presence on the web.

**COMMENTS:** Provide at least one E-mail address for comments (from the public) for every server or functional area on a server.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:** The role of the systems administrator (or webmaster) is to serve the content providers in a Treasury office or bureau. A web administrator maintains a stable, secure infrastructure on the web. The content provider owns the content provided and may request backup tapes. A new web site becomes official when the Treasury web site links to it. The Treasury web site will link to new sites that comply with the Web Business Practices, the Web Quality Process, the Web Style Guide for Administrators, and the Web Guidelines for Content Providers.

The systems administrator (or web master) manages the necessary web site hardware, software, physical space, security, communications links, and support personnel. The systems administrator responds to technical problems, maintains the server, provides contingency backup of the information content and software, resolves operational problems, maintains a stable presence on the web, and oversees the 24 hour operation. Encoding/programming staff finalizes the content submitted by the content providers. A help desk or page on the web site identifies someone to respond to technical help requests.

All current Treasury web sites should be assessed by the Federal Computer Incident Response Capability (FEDCIRC) team, a collaborative effort of NIST, Carnegie Mellon CERT, and Livermore Computer Internet Advisory Council or an equivalent authority. Site security measures and procedures must be instituted to ensure that modification is limited to authorized persons. Electronic Commerce servers must, in addition, comply with secure socket layer protection. Organizations planning to develop new servers shall contact the Chair of the Web Working Group regarding security provisions and assessments prior to making the new server available to the Internet.